

VZCZCXRO4380  
RR RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHCI #0028 0370513  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 060513Z FEB 09  
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2258  
INFO RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2762

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000028

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS  
STATE PASS TO USAID  
HHS PASS TO OGHA (KULIKOWSKI/CUMMINGS)  
STATE FOR OES/PCI, OES/IHB AND SCA/INS  
STATE FOR STAS AND AIAG (REED-ROWE)  
HHS FOR NIH/FIC (GLASS/MAMPILLY/HANDLEY)  
HHS FOR FDA (LUMPKIN/VALDEZ)  
HHS FOR CDC (BLOUNT/COX)  
USDA FOR APHIS (FLEMING/BURLESON)  
USDA FOR FAS (RIKER/BEAN)  
NEW DELHI FOR FAS/APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [AMED](#) [KFLU](#) [IN](#) [BD](#)

SUBJECT: NEW AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK CONFIRMED IN WEST BENGAL

REF: A. A) KOLKATA 3  
1B. B) 08 KOLKATA 26

1. (U) On January 30, the Indian Ministry of Agriculture confirmed the presence of the H5N1 virus in West Bengal's Coochbehar district. The two avian influenza (AI) epicenters are in the villages of Nagar Bhagni and Uttar Dangkoba, in two non-contiguous administrative blocks of the district. The epicenters are approximately 200 km east of Darjeeling, the site of the latest outbreak in West Bengal (Ref A), and 15 kilometers from the informal India-Bangladesh border crossing point at Gitaldaha. The last reported AI epicenter in Coochbehar was in January 2008 in the same district but at a different location (Ref B). There are no reports of human infection.

2. (SBU) According to the district magistrate, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, culling began in Coochbehar on February 1. Over the course of three days, thirty Rapid Reaction Teams composed of five persons each, planned to cull 45,000 chickens and ducks from backyard poultry operations. In addition to culling poultry within the three kilometer epicenter radius, Sinha told post that the local administration has restricted poultry trade to and from Bangladesh into the district. He is satisfied with the Indian Border Security Force stepped up efforts to prevent birds from being transported across the borders. Although there is no legitimate cross-border traffic through Gitaldaha, illegal poultry and cattle trade is widely acknowledged.

3. (SBU) According to West Bengal's Principal Secretary of the Animal Resources Development Department the Coochbehar AI outbreak is an isolated incident and not linked to any of the other recent outbreaks in Eastern India (West Bengal, Assam and Sikkim) that have occurred since November 2008. The West Bengal State Minister for Animal Resources Development, in a string of media interviews, has also emphasized the reduced scale and spread compared with earlier in 2008.

Comment

4. (SBU) Like the previous outbreaks in late 2008 and early

2009, it appears that this outbreak will be easily contained by West Bengal state officials. The West Bengal state officials have continued to be forthcoming with information to post about AI outbreaks and recently expressed interested in opportunities to leverage USG assistance to increase public awareness about avian influenza.

PAYNE